

VZCZCXYZ0002
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #2778 2272247
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 152247Z AUG 06
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1615
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5534
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6747

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 002778

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - SCOTT WALKER
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ISRAEL-/HEZBOLLAH COMBAT, GWOT

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave extensive coverage August 15 to the investigations into the Presidential Office's special state affairs expense account; former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust President Chen Shui-bian; and the KMT's plan to detail its handling of the party's assets. All papers also reported on inside pages President Chen's plan to visit Palau in early September, the same time local activist groups will try to unseat Chen.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, columnist Antonio Chiang noted in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" that Israel is the loser in its fight against Hezbollah, and the U.S.'s over-tilted position toward Israel has made its "New Middle East" program a castle in the air. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" slashed at the U.S. and British "war on terrorism," saying they have used the threat of al-Qaeda and possible attacks to cow their citizens "into grudgingly accepting legislation that has taken away many of their constitutional rights and freedoms." End summary.

¶3. Israel-Hezbollah Combat

"Where Arms Alone Are Not Enough to Be Presumed On"

Columnist Antonio Chiang noted in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (8/15):

"The battle between Israel and Hezbollah is asymmetrical, whether viewed militarily or politically. It will be a victory for Hezbollah as long as it can survive and not be wiped out. But for Israel, it will not triumph unless it wins in the military, political, diplomatic and security aspects. The UN cease-fire agreement offers an easy retreat for both sides who otherwise have no way to back down. But Israel is obviously the loser, given the fact that both the international and domestic situations are not favorable for it. The United States' image in the Arab world is also severely damaged. ..."

"The bloody scenes created by Israel's air strikes sparked outrage in the Arab world. Support for Hezbollah soared quickly, forcing Lebanon to publicly support it. Iran, as a result, held a tougher position on its nuclear weapons, and Syria is expected to recover its influence on Lebanon. The United States' over-tilted position toward Israel in this war will make its 'New Middle East' program a castle in the air. Israel will face a more severe challenge than before in terms of its security. ..."

¶4. GWOT

"Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/15):

"... The threatened attacks may have been real, but many in the UK are becoming increasingly skeptical over the way events like these are being handled, and see last week's terror alert as the latest episode in a campaign by the authorities to keep the population enveloped in a blanket of fear. Such fear allows the British government to continue pursuing its hawkish foreign policy in countries like Iraq and Lebanon while pushing through draconian security measures that curtail civil liberties at home such as biometric ID cards. ... But when it comes to employing the tactics of fear, the UK government is a virtual novice.

"Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, the administration of US President George W. Bush has used the threat of al-Qaeda and possible attacks to cow US citizens into grudgingly accepting legislation that has taken away many of their constitutional rights and freedoms. Instead of using these terrible attacks as impetus for finding solutions to the Middle East problem and tackling the root causes of Muslim extremism in a bid to prevent future attacks, the Bush administration, backed by Blair, launched the 'war on terror.' The fear generated by this 'war' and the subsequent hatred of the West that coalition behavior in Iraq has spawned have been used by Bush to keep the vast majority of people from questioning policy decisions like the invasion of Iraq, which would otherwise have been unmasked as the folly it turned out to be. ...

YOUNG